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THE INDUSTRIOUS APPRENTICE.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

GREAT SYNAGOGUE,

ON SABBATH פ' ויטב 5648, DECEMBER 10TH, 1887.

BY THE

REV. DR. HERMANN ADLER,

DELEGATE CHIEF RABBI.

Printed by Request.

LONDON:

WERTHEIMER, LEA AND CO., CIRCUS PLACE, LONDON WALL.

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THE INDUSTRIOUS APPRENTICE.

וַיְהִי יוֹ אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית
אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרִי:

“And the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a prosperous man ; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.”—GENESIS xxxix. 2.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,—As you behold the mighty crowds that surge through the main thoroughfares of the City during the busy hours of the day, you have doubtlessly now and again said to yourselves, “Of what surpassing interest would it be, if I could read the thoughts and scan the emotions that are throbbing in the brains and hearts of this vast multitude.” Only before the Omniscient they lie open and revealed; and a form of benediction embodying this idea has been framed to be said when beholding a great concourse of people:*

בְּרוּךְ חֵבֶם הַרְזִים “Blessed be He who knoweth the secret thoughts of each of these.” And yet, however diverse the reflections of the multitudes that pour into the City may be, however divergent

* Berachoth, p. 58a.

the wants and wishes of the assemblage now gathered before me, there is one purpose in which they and you are agreed ; there is one aim and object which you all earnestly and sincerely desire to attain. *Success in life* is the one object dear to all our hearts. Though some portions of the service may have left you cold and unimpressed, there was no want of fervour when you craved just now, חַיִּים נְשֹׂא פִּרְנָסָה חַיִּים שֶׁל עֲשָׂר וְכָבוֹד, "a life of sustenance, a life of prosperity and honour." We are all anxious to get on in the world, to become independent and to obtain a competence, to possess the blessing of a comfortable home, and to gain the respect of our neighbours. It thus becomes a matter of keen interest for us all, and especially for those who are at the commencement of their career, to enquire how this success is to be achieved, this competence to be won.

For this purpose no more instructive example could be chosen than the history of Joseph. Every line, nay, every word, that Holy Writ tells us about him is fraught with admonition to our young men during that most critical period in their career, when they are thrown, oftentimes single handed, upon this huge city, wherein competition in every pursuit and calling is so fierce ; where their daily path is beset by so many terrible temptations. I would select only a few salient points

in Joseph's career. Is it not marvellous, almost incomprehensible that this raw, inexperienced, and petted lad, should within thirteen years after he had left his father's house, have become Prime Minister of Pharaoh and Viceroy of Egypt? The key to the enigma is furnished us in the words of our text: "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian."

Each of the clauses of this verse deserves our close attention. It might be argued, No wonder that Joseph prospered, seeing that, as we are told, God was with him. Brethren, we reverently acknowledge the conspicuous manifestation of Divine Providence in Joseph's career. The blessing of the Lord was upon him. But we also know that God does not bless folly, stupidity, carelessness and sloth. God was with Joseph because Joseph was with Him, *שהיה שם שמים שגור בפיו*—because the name and the thought of God were on his mouth and in his heart, instigating him to diligence, uprightness, and stainless integrity. There came a crisis to him which offered him wealth, and ease and luxury, if only he would consent to do the base tempter's will; but strong in his faith in God and firm in his virtue, he said "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Better a felon's cell and the favour of his Lord, than the

highest earthly honours, and an upbraiding conscience within.

Others, again, will argue, There is no difficulty with respect to Joseph's success. The Bible plainly reveals the secret to us. He was a lucky man; befriended by fortune. Now I may assert that there is hardly any word in our vocabulary which is more systematically abused than this little word "*Luck*." It is made responsible for all our faults and failures, our troubles and vices. Talk with the man of business, who has ruined himself by his extravagance or idleness, and you will find that he regards himself as the victim of ill-luck, pleading that circumstances were against him. If a man is pointed out to him who has risen to the highest rung of the ladder by dint of sheer hard labour, he will say "Oh! that man has been fortunate." In answer to this I would say, There is no such thing as "luck," if by "luck" we mean the success that attends a man as the result of circumstances beyond his control. Used in this sense "luck" is the mere bugbear of the idle, the languid and the self-indulgent. It is true that unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances occur to every one of us in life, which shape our destinies. But it depends upon ourselves how we utilise these occurrences, and allow ourselves to be affected by them. Every youth has a chance given him to

succeed in life ; it depends upon him whether he will seize the occasion or whether, through idleness and apathy, he will allow it to slip by.

There is a tide in the affairs of man
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.
Omitted, all the voyage of this life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.*

There are difficulties that confront every one of us. It depends upon us whether we shall conquer the difficulties, or whether the difficulties shall conquer us.

These truths are exemplified with great force in Joseph's life story. You will find that the success he achieved is due to the bravery and courage with which he confronts the adverse circumstances in which he is placed. What could have been more wretched for the indulged favourite, the cosseted home-bird, than to be torn away from his father's side, and to be sold as a slave in a foreign land? But he did not nurse his great sorrow, nor brood over it, nor give way to incessant gloom and despondency ; וַיְהִי אִישׁ מְצָלִיחַ. "He became a prosperous man." The whole secret of success lies in that one word מְצָלִיחַ which is derived from the verb צָלַח "to carve, to cleave, to break through"; thus teaching us that success is only to be achieved by struggling with adverse circumstances. And similarly the Midrash renders

* Shakespeare, "Julius Cæsar," Act iv., Scene 3.

these words גבר קפוז, "an active man, ever on the alert." In the Tanchuma recently published, the words are paraphrased היה חוגר מהניו, "He girded his loins," and a somewhat quaint description is added of the whimsicalities of his master, that now he called for mulled wine, anon for wine that had been cooled, anon for spiced wine, anon for absinthe, and whatever he required, Joseph at once had in readiness. This well illustrates the serving-man's willing diligence. Instead of wasting his strength in useless regrets, instead of pampering his vanity by indulging in morbid reminiscences of better days, he manfully accepted what he felt to be the inevitable, and set himself with hearty earnestness to make the best of it. Though unused to menial service or severe labour, he took hold with a firm hand whatever he had to do, and did it with his mind and might, joyous and cheerful, singing at his work. What a depth of pathos is there in the words, "And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian." Torn away, though he was, from his beloved home, sojourning in a foreign land, reduced to servitude, he, by his modesty, his activity, and his aptitude to learn, gained the approval of his master. And thus in due process of time, having passed through a long and toilsome apprenticeship, he reached the top-most rung of the ladder. It was through serving

in the house of Potiphar and in prison with *energy* and *perseverance* that he learnt to rule. It was by means of a long and arduous process of education, a training severe and painful in its character, that he became fitted at last to fill the high position which he was called upon by Providence to occupy.

Dear Congregants, in bringing this example before you, I have had a thoroughly practical end in view. Many of you have, like Joseph, been forced to quit your native land, and have arrived here in a foreign country, without friends, without means. You are all obliged to work for your living. I would earnestly advise you to choose the pursuit of handicraft as your calling. The stress of competition, not merely between the indwellers of this land, but between this and other countries, is continually growing keener and fiercer. If the working classes are to emerge victoriously from the struggle for existence, if this dear England of ours is to retain its high position as a great manufacturing country, the most strenuous efforts should be directed to the twofold endeavour of making technical instruction an integral factor in elementary education, and of diligently training the youth of this land in art and handicraft. This is a broad and far-reaching theme, on which the exigencies of time will not permit me now to dwell. But I will briefly advert to this question in so far

as it bears upon the status of our own community. Whoever has only the most superficial knowledge of the Bible knows the high value that is set therein upon the pursuit of mechanical trades. What a remarkable passage is that contained in Exodus,* where the Lord calls upon Bezaleel to be one of the architects of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness! "And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." Here not merely the planning, the devising of skilful designs is spoken of as due to the inspiration of God's spirit, but also the practical execution of those thoughts, the skill and deftness with which those designs are to be carried out in every material, the working in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of timber to work in all manner of workmanship—all are declared to spring from the inspiration of the Most High.

And similarly our teachers of old are enthusiastic in their praise and inculcation of work. אָהוּב אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה "Love work," says Schemajah.† כָּל תּוֹרָה שֶׁאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה סוֹפָהּ בְּטִלָּה, "The study of the Law which is not conjoined with work, will at the end come to nought," is a motto of

* Exod. xxxi. 1-5 ; xxxv. 30-35.

† Ethics of the Fathers, i. § 10.

Rabbi Gamaliel,* גְּדוּלָּהּ מְלָאכָה שְׂמֵפֶדֶת אֶת בְּעָלֶיהָ
 "Great is work, for it honoureth its master"† It
 was laid down as a duty incumbent upon every
 father to teach his son a handicraft, and if he
 failed to teach his son, it was accounted unto him
 as if he encouraged him in robbery,‡ for he who
 cannot earn his subsistence by honest means, will,
 it is to be feared, have recourse to dishonesty.
 These admonitions had the desired effect, for there
 is hardly one art or industry, practised in those
 days, of which we do not find able representatives
 among our people. It would seem also as if those
 different trades associated themselves in guilds;
 for there existed in Jerusalem a synagogue of
 the coppersmiths, a street of the bakers, the gate
 of the carpenters, a quarter of the city exclusively
 inhabited by potters. In the magnificent syna-
 gogue of Alexandria, separate portions of it were
 assigned to the jewellers, metal-workers, smiths,
 weavers, and other trades. When a foreign
 operative came to that city he seated himself
 next the members of his craft, and was supported
 by them until he obtained employment.§ During
 the many weary centuries of restriction and op-
 pression that ensued, our fathers were, alas, pre-
 cluded from pursuing these occupations; their

* Ethics of the Fathers, ii. § 2. † Nedarim, p. 49b.

‡ Kiddushin, pp. 29, 30. § Succah, p. 51b.

hands lost their cunning. They were compelled to addict themselves to commerce in its different forms. But now happier days have dawned upon us. We are no longer treated as aliens and outcasts. The barriers of guild have been removed. Everyone is at liberty to adopt the occupation for which he feels an inward incentive.

The managers of the principal charitable organisation in our midst are proving themselves veritable *Guardians* of the poor, by their solicitude to wean them from hawking and costermongering, and from the harmful practice of devoting themselves to a few overstocked precarious trades. The Industrial Committee of our Board of Guardians has now for several years undertaken the task of apprenticing the children of our working classes to certain mechanical occupations. The considerations which guide the committee in the selection of industries, are that the apprentices should be enabled to keep sabbath and festivals, that the occupations should require technical knowledge and skill, that they should prove remunerative, and not be subject to fluctuation. These endeavours are meeting with the merited success. Several hundred apprentices employed in about seventy different industries, are under the charge of the committee. The zeal and care with which this task is accomplished, the

supervision that is exercised, the period of probation, and the repayment of the premiums that are prescribed—all this was recorded in highly commendatory terms in a leader which recently appeared in the *Times*. The results that had been achieved were pronounced “brilliant,” and it was contended, that what a single denominational association had accomplished, could not be impracticable when attempted on a larger scale.

I turn to you, my younger brethren, and ask you to second these efforts, by evincing an earnest desire and willing alacrity to devote yourselves to industrial occupations and to become thoroughly skilled workmen. An ancient proverb is quoted in the Talmud, *כפנא ואבבא דאומנא לא חליף,* ש, שני הוי כפנא ואבבא דאומנא לא חליף, “The famine lasted seven years, but it reached not the door of the mechanic.” You may have heard the familiar adages, מלאכה מלוכה “Work is a crown.” מלאכה ברכה “Work is a blessing.” The truth of these sayings, alas, is not exemplified in the case of tailors, shoe, cap, and cigar makers, who know but too well how these occupations are overcrowded, the hardships they have to endure, the low wages they are compelled to accept, the terribly long hours they are forced to labour. It is the purpose of the system inaugurated by the Industrial Committee to check and prevent these evils. With

* Sanhedrim, p. 29a.

this view also the managers of the *נוה צדק* have established a workshop in connexion with their Institution, where the pupils will learn to become handy in the use of tools, and acquire a liking for the pursuit of handicraft.

If these efforts are to attain the desired end, it is for you, the apprentices, to cultivate the virtues of perseverance and determination. It is a great evil on the part of some of our lads, that they wish to become masters ere they have acquired even the rudiments of their craft. Learn from Joseph that your prosperity depends upon the patience with which you stick to your task, looking neither to the right nor to the left, not quarrelling with your work, not complaining of the drudgery, not discouraged by failures, but welcoming them as pointing out to you your defects and shortcomings, so that these may prove stepping-stones to success.

Hogarth, the great pictorial satirist, has powerfully illustrated this truth in a series of pictures which he has named "Industry and Idleness." In the first he depicts two fellow-'prentices at their looms. Their future career is sufficiently indicated by the two-fold quotation from the Book of Proverbs. On the one side is inscribed the text, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich;*" on the other,

* Prov. x. 4.

“And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.”* And then we see in successive paintings the Industrious Apprentice trusted by his master, married to his master’s daughter, made Lord Mayor of London, whilst the Idle Apprentice is turned out of the house, runs his evil course of vice and crime, until he is brought a prisoner before his former companion, now seated in dignity on the magistrate’s bench, is sentenced and executed at Tyburn. How often within our own knowledge have these two stories been repeated !

Now, Brethren, no more striking evidence could be given of the high value attached to the pursuit of handicrafts in this country than the ceremony which, within a few hours, will be witnessed at the People’s Palace. The founders of that institution have conferred an unspeakable boon upon the poor toilers in East London. With true-hearted enthusiasm they have realised a design which was long regarded as the day-dream of a poetic mind. They have established a centre of healthful recreation, intellectual entertainment, and wholesome amusement, where the hard-worked labourers may for a time be lifted out of their dreary and weary lives ; where some colour and light may be shed upon their dull existences—a cause which deserves the heartiest co-operation of all whom God has

* Prov. xxiii. 21.

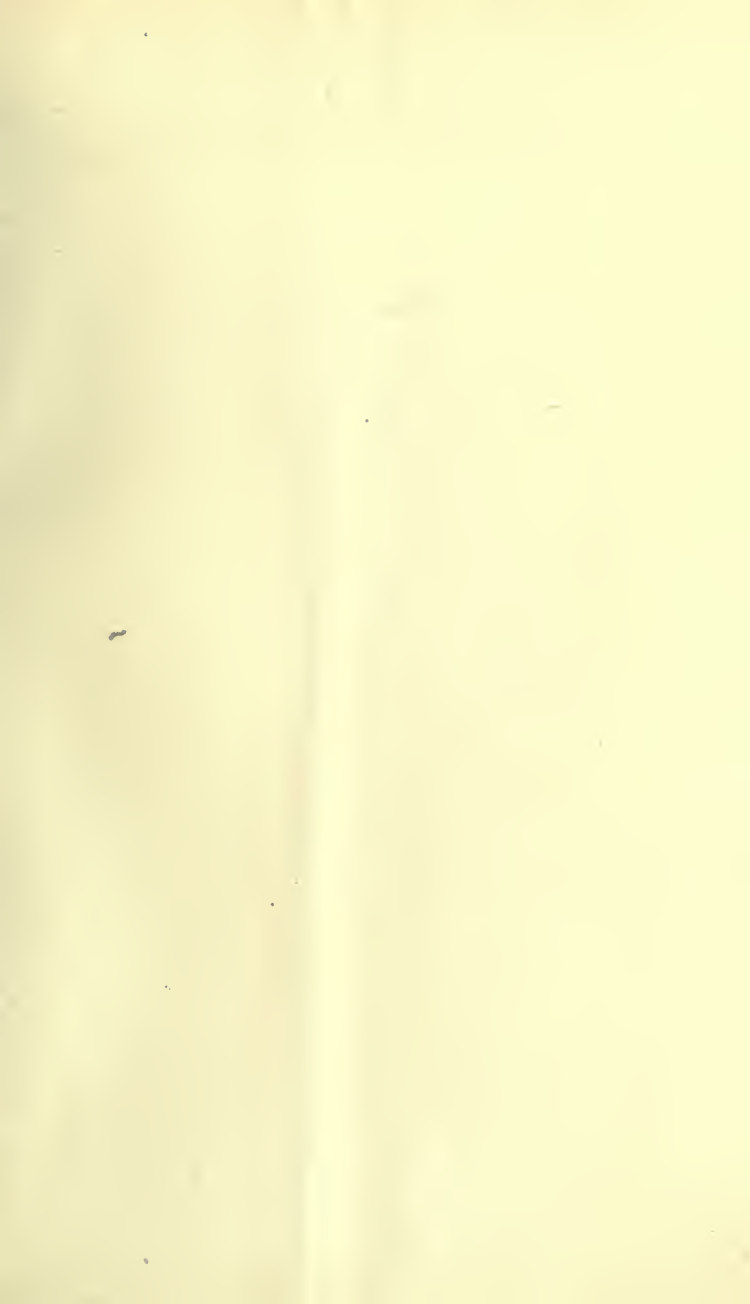
blessed with time and means. An equally valuable service has been rendered to the wage-earning classes by the encouragement given within the People's Palace to the cultivation of industrial trades. Technical day and evening schools have been established, under the charge of experienced teachers; ranges of workshops have been set up for teaching the principal trades carried on in the East end, the tuition being conducted by skilled artizans. At the suggestion of our Industrial Committee, an Apprentices' Exhibition of Art, Industry, and Invention will be held within its walls, which the Prince of Wales will open this afternoon, and at which, I rejoice to learn, our Jewish youth will be worthily represented. There you will see the work of the goldsmith and of the carpenter, of "him that smootheth with the hammer and smiteth with the anvil." You will see there the exhibits of those who "devise cunning works, and in cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of timber, and in all manner of workmanship." This visit of the Heir Apparent will prove to you the high honour in which skilled labour is held in this land. The success already achieved by your brethren will, I trust, stimulate you to embrace mechanical occupations with joyful eagerness and thoughtful earnestness, so that the time may not be distant when there will be

a large body of sturdy and skilled artificers in our midst, who, in virtue of the strength and cunning of their hands, will occupy an honoured place among the mechanics and artizans of this country, and who will prove moreover by their sobriety, their industry, their devotion to their faith, and their readiness to make sacrifices for its sake, that beneath their workmen's aprons there beats a good sound Jewish heart, so that by Divine help they will become prosperous men in the best and truest sense of the word.

Almighty God ! Our fathers in their pilgrimage walked by Thy guidance, and were saved by Thy loving kindness. Unto us, their children, mayst Thou still be a shield and a refuge, a covert from the storms and heat of life ! Thou hast bidden us "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Give us understanding that we may learn to hallow our work, that we may perform it with energy and good-will, in truth and with honesty. Vouchsafe Thy blessing unto us, that we may not labour in vain, and toil for nought, but that we may earn our daily bread, and not become dependent on the bounties of our fellow-men. Inspire us with Thy spirit, that we may worthily keep Thy sacred day of rest,

sanctifying it by cessation from work, by fervent prayer, by a loving study of Thy Word, and by the pure joys of home. May our weekly festival teach us how to purify our pleasures, to refine our joys and elevate our sources of amusement. We crave Thy blessing upon this synagogue. May it remain, as it was in former days, the abode of pious devotion, a centre of spiritual activity. Thou who art the Healer of all flesh, hold Thy protecting hand, we beseech Thee, over Friederich Wilhelm, Crown Prince of Germany. Vouchsafe wisdom to his physicians, that they may be enabled to cope with the dread disease. Preserve in strength and cheerfulness a life so precious. Sustain his faithful Consort, the beloved daughter of our Queen, and his illustrious kinsfolk in this their grave affliction. Be with us all in our daily trials. May Thy compassion revive every fainting soul. **אֵל יְיָ וְיִצְחָק לָנוּ**, "The Lord is our God, he will give us light." Amen!











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